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ABSTRACT

A review of the status of English language instruction in Hong Kong begins with an overview of the role of English in the society in general, and outlines the status of English use and instruction in the educational system at all levels (elementary, secondary, higher, vocational, adult, and teacher), the characteristics and training of English language instructors, the type and availability of instructional materials, educational administration and planning in relation to English teaching, English outside the educational system, British and other international support, commercial opportunities related to English instruction, creative writing, language research, and other sources of information. The main strength of the English language teaching situation in Hong Kong is the colony's need to maintain its position as a cultural bridge between East and West. The second strength is found in the sophisticated level of trade, tourism, banking, and international commerce and the services attached to them which demand widespread daily use of English, creating a favorable language learning situation. The main problems are in the question of the medium of instruction at the junior secondary level, language teachers' professional standards, and the question of whether English should be taught at all in primary schools. (MSE)

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English Teaching Profile

Hong Kong

July 1986

1 Role and status of English

The role of English in Hong Kong is extremely important. It is one of the two official languages of government and the courts, and for some purposes it is the pre-eminent one. It is the most common medium of communication at the higher levels of government.

Within the education system English is widely used as the medium of study beyond the primary level. At the tertiary level, in addition to being the medium of instruction at the University of Hong Kong, a sound knowledge of the language is essential for most of the courses of study available. It is noteworthy that the great majority of the academic resources of the Chinese University of Hong Kong are, in most subjects, available only in English.

In addition, English is extremely important as a language of continuing education. A substantial proportion of non-formal courses and programmes of further education, both publicly-sponsored and private, are conducted in the medium of English.

The continued growth of Hong Kong as a major international centre of finance and banking requires a substantial cadre of persons at all the higher levels who are proficient in English, the pre-eminent language of banking and finance world-wide. In many Hong Kong businesses and commercial ventures, and most of those which have international connections, a knowledge of English is essential beyond the most junior levels. Tourism is a key industry. In 1985, nearly three and a half million visitors spent well over HK$14,700 million dollars in Hong Kong and it is predicted that these figures will grow in the future. The principal language of tourism is English, even for those whose mother-tongue is an Asian language.

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English is widely used in the entertainment industry also, and in all technological fields. It is invariably used as the medium of the international communications network of which Hong Kong is the centre.

Proficiency in English is the key factor in achieving social mobility and in widening the available range of job opportunities. It is for this reason that every single child in Hong Kong is learning English (with greater or lesser success).

2 English within the education system

Since 1978, the Hong Kong Government has provided a basic nine-year education cycle to all children; six years of primary education (ages six to twelve approx) and three years of junior secondary education, up to about the age of fifteen. The powerful commitment of the people in Hong Kong to education is more strikingly demonstrated, however, by what happens before primary 1 and secondary 3. The great majority of pre-school children, perhaps as many as ninety per cent, attend pre-school/kindergarten classes of various levels, all of them in private sector, fee-paying institutions.

The present situation after secondary 3 is as follows: virtually all pupils in form 3 enter for the Junior Secondary Education Allocation system (JSEA) which comprises the schools' internal assessments of individual pupils; these are then scaled among schools by a public examination in the three core subjects of Chinese, English and mathematics. This 'scaling test' is set and administered by the Education Department. On the results of the JSEA, a substantial proportion (seventy-four per cent in 1985) are allocated subsidized places in form 4 of government, government-aided and private schools (in the latter through a 'bought places' scheme). The great majority of those not allocated in this way nevertheless succeed in continuing their education beyond form 3, either sponsored in the technical institutes or at their own expense in the private schools; the quality of government and aided schools is generally high (the best schools are all in the public sector) and that of most private schools low. It is probable that as many as ninety per cent of children in Hong Kong at present continue their education in one way or another to the form 5 level.

The Government is under pressure to abolish the JSEA and provide subsidized places for all children to the end of form 5 (see section 6).

The above applies to Cantonese-speaking children, the vast majority of the school-going population of Hong Kong. Non-Cantonese speakers are catered for by the English Schools Foundation (ESF). The ESF schools receive equivalent subsidies from the Government but are administered independently, charge substantial fees and follow a UK type of curriculum and educational philosophy, 'comprehensive' at the secondary level.

The following table gives details of types of institution, and enrolment in 1985:

Description	Government and aided	Private	Total
Kindergarten	-	229,089	229,089
Primary	480,268	58,660	538,928
Secondary	321,500	167,434	488,934
Technical institutes	45,600	-	45,600
Post-secondary and adult	26,732	77,403	104,135
Colleges of education	2,764	-	2,764

Educational opportunities have greatly increased at the tertiary level also, though demand still enormously exceeds supply: the chance of a qualified secondary-leaver getting a university place, for example, are about one in ten. There are two universities, with a third in the planning stage, two polytechnics, four 'post-secondary colleges'.

	Full-time	Part-time
University of Hong Kong	7,000+	25,000
Chinese University of Hong Kong	5,250	39,000
Hong Kong Polytechnic	8,600	24,000
City Polytechnic	2,600	-
Baptist College	2,197	30,600

Hong Kong Polytechnic has been a degree-awarding institution since 1983: Baptist College begins degree courses in September 1986 and City Polytechnic is planning for their introduction. The Macau-based, private University of East Asia has established a tertiary level Open College in Hong Kong which conducts degree courses on the British Open University model.

Primary

At the primary level (from six years), English is taught as a subject from primary 1, and occupies up to twenty-five per cent of the timetable. Primary schools are bi-sessional, i.e. there are two school populations, one morning and one afternoon, and the medium of instruction in the great majority of the schools is Chinese (spoken Cantonese and standard written Chinese). It should be noted that, in spite of discouragement from the Education Department, most kindergartens teach English, in a highly formal and largely unproductive manner.

At the end of the primary stage of education pupils have a choice, at least in theory, between continuing their secondary education in Chinese by enrolling in a Chinese middle school (where English is taught as a subject) or switching to English-medium education in an Anglo-Chinese secondary school. In practice, the pull of English is so strong that, at present, nearly ninety per cent of secondary pupils are in Anglo-Chinese schools (and only half of those in Chinese middle schools gave a Chinese-medium school as their first option!) The inevitable result has been that very large numbers of pupils, who should be continuing their post-primary education through the mother-tongue, are attempting to cope with an 'Anglo-Chinese' education.

Secondary

In all the Anglo-Chinese schools, English textbooks are used (except for Chinese language and Chinese history) and all homework (very important in Hong Kong), written work and tests (even more important) are in English. However, the spoken language used during lessons varies very widely. At one end of the spectrum, a great deal of spoken English is used in class. This is the situation in which, predictably, the leading aided schools, mainly long-established institutions of missionary or religious affiliation, produce most of the Chinese-English bilinguals which the society requires. At the other end of the spectrum, as much as ninety per cent of the oral interaction is in Cantonese; these schools are Anglo-Chinese in little more than name. Other schools are located between the two extremes but in the great majority of secondary schools some sort of mixture of the two languages, crudely called 'Chinglish' locally, is the normal mode of teaching. This situation is widely deplored on educational grounds and constantly attacked; it has been rightly asserted that for many secondary school pupils, perhaps a majority, the rest of the curriculum is being used as a blind instrument to upgrade proficiency in English, often no more than marginally. The result is that school-leavers cannot communicate effectively in either language. The situation is not an easy one to change, given strong family pressure in favour of the Anglo-Chinese secondary school, which clearly represents something very important in the minds of most Hong Kong parents of school age children.

The principal public examinations by which English is examined are:

a) Form 3 Scaling Test (English), see JSEA above (section 2).

b) Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), taken in form 5. This is the most important examination in Hong Kong and affects the further education, career choices and job opportunities of the great majority of school-leavers. The HKCEE offers a choice in the English language paper between Syllabus A (for Chinese middle school pupils) and Syllabus B (for Anglo-Chinese school pupils). In fact, Syllabus A has little prestige and more and more Chinese middle school pupils are attempting Syllabus B. A credit (C grade) in Syllabus B is accepted as equivalent to an O-level pass in GCE/(GCSE).

c) Higher Level Examination, for entry to the Chinese University of Hong Kong, taken during the first year of the sixth form. Passes in English and Chinese are necessary for entry to the Chinese University (a four-year undergraduate course) where English, Cantonese and Mandarin are used in teaching. The figures of enrolment in the secondary schools given above guarantee that three-quarters of the students at the Chinese University come from Anglo-Chinese secondary schools.

d) Advanced level in Use of English, for entry to the University of Hong Kong. The medium of instruction at this University is mainly English, almost exclusively so for lectures, though Cantonese is increasingly being used by Chinese members of staff in tutorials and seminars.

Syllabuses in all subjects are prepared by the Department of Education Curriculum Development Committee and recommended for use in schools. The syllabuses for English, both primary and secondary, have recently been drastically revised along more communicative lines and new course materials are being written to suit them. The new generation of primary courses started to appear in the classrooms in 1984, followed by new secondary courses a year later. The actual choice of textbooks is left entirely to schools, but the

Education Department regularly sends out a very full list of recommended textbooks in all subjects. Unsuitable teaching materials are sometimes prohibited for use in schools.

There is a distinction between language and literature from the secondary level onwards. Language takes up by far the bulk of the resources and little interest is shown in literature, which is less obviously useful in obtaining future employment.

There is a special English section in the Advisory Inspectorate of the Department of Education. As well as inspecting and advising English teachers in the schools, this body directs the English Language Teaching Centre which started operations in 1970. The Centre offers refresher courses for primary teachers and for secondary teachers of English, and short seminars and workshops on various topics. It also prepares tapes and other teaching materials, and the Inspectorate distributes lists of these to the schools.

There is some English for Special Purposes (ESP) in the pre-vocational schools, the technical institutes and the Polytechnic. A course, or series of courses, in the use of English for Commercial Purposes, offered by the extra-mural department of Hong Kong University, has proved popular.

It is widely believed that general standards of English have deteriorated in the past ten years, with the replacement of expatriates by local teachers, and the demands of a growing population for the key, which English represents, to higher education and better career prospects. More attention needs to be paid to the teaching of English for Special Purposes, especially at the five technical institutes which constitute a growth area of education in Hong Kong: two new technical institutes are due to open in September 1986 and a third in 1987.

Secondary level evening classes for adults are provided by the Government in a wide range of subjects. In 1985, over 4,000 adults attended classes in English in government Evening Institutes. A very comprehensive extra-mural programme for adults of English language, English literature and English for Special Purposes is offered by Hong Kong University. In 1985, 54,000 adults were attending government adult education courses of various kinds.

Programmes in five subject areas, including English, are transmitted to schools on a regular basis by the Educational Television Service of the Education Department. For primary 3, 4 and 5, thirty programmes have been prepared for each school year, with sixteen programmes for primary 6. The programmes are of fifteen minutes duration. From secondary 1 to secondary 3 there are sixteen programmes per school year, each of which lasts about twenty minutes.

Three types of programme form the basis of ETV English language programmes Language for Schools, namely (a) thematic, (b) structural and (c) language arts. While the general aim of all the programmes is to improve pupils' aural/oral skills, each type of programme lays emphasis on different aspects of language learning. A thematic programme is designed to help students express themselves in a variety of everyday situations. A structural programme deals with basic problem areas for Chinese learners. It touches on the mechanics of the language: structure, usage and pronunciation. The last type of programme, called 'language arts', is not primarily concerned with situational English nor with formal accuracy. It sets out to expose pupils to the use of English for purposes other than ordinary communication, and particularly to develop their interest and pleasure in language as such.

3 Teachers of English

The teaching cadre in the schools is almost entirely Chinese, with a small number of native speakers of English. In tertiary institutions, however, especially in language departments, there are still large - though decreasing - numbers of native speakers of English.

General teacher education is provided at the three colleges of education (a fourth is planned) administered by the Education Department. These colleges offer a two-year full-time course of initial teacher-training to students with the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination and a three-year full-time course to students with the Hong Kong Certificate of Education. They also conduct in-service training courses, including part-time courses for serving teachers of kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. In 1985, enrolments were as follows:

three-year full-time course	1,358
two-year full-time course	1,003
in-service/re-training courses	2,103

The colleges are generally able to train enough people to meet the needs of government and government-aided schools, where almost all teachers are qualified. (The picture is very different in the private sector, where a majority of teachers are untrained.) The main weakness of the English departments of the colleges is the total absence of native speakers of English. This has led to a tendency for English to become fossilized as the lecture-room language and be rarely, if ever, used for the purpose of communication outside. In 1986, the Education Department reversed its 'localization' policy for staffing college English departments, and sought to recruit ten native speaker lecturers for the beginning of the academic year 1986/87.

Both universities provide a one-year postgraduate course in education, and the intake of new graduates who intend to teach is being increased. Hong Kong University also offers a two-year part-time MEd with TEFL as a major option.

The Institute of Language in Education (ILE), founded in 1982 as a training and research institute, organizes refresher courses, seminars and workshops for teachers of English and Chinese. Serving primary teachers are released full-time for four months and a replacement teacher provided for their schools. Courses for secondary teachers will commence in September 1986. The Institute also publishes a journal, and mounts an annual international seminar on Language Teacher Education: the second one will be held in December 1986.

Since 1979, the British Council has been commissioned by the Education Department to mount in-service refresher courses for primary and secondary teachers of English. The primary teachers attend part-time for ninety-six hours over twelve weeks, and the secondary teachers for a three weeks full-time intensive course in the summer. The 1986 programme is for 200 primary and 300 secondary teachers. These programmes are expected to continue, on a decreasing scale, until 1988, when it is expected that ILE will be able to absorb them.

An important development, as yet only at the discussion stage, is that arising from disquiet (expressed in the Executive and Legislative Councils) at allegedly falling standards of English. The Education Department has been

asked by the Government to produce proposals for the large-scale recruitment of expatriate native-speaker teachers of English for the first three forms of secondary schools. The Education Department has invited the British Council to submit detailed specifications and costs for a scheme to recruit and administer up to 200 teachers per year.

Teachers come to the British Council in increasing numbers to frequent the specialized ELT library, attend talks, and visit the resource centre. There are two local professional organizations solely for teachers of English, the Primary English Teachers' Association and the Secondary School Teachers of English Association. Both these organizations grew out of participants attending British Council courses. They meet regularly in the British Council. The Inspectorate of English, through the Language Centre, also fulfils a number of functions, in that it runs a specialist library, sends circulars to all schools on in-service courses, distributes language-teaching notes and notes on trends in curriculum development, and publishes an English Bulletin, an annual journal for teachers.

The Professional Teachers' Union, an important trade union of teachers, with a wide membership, has a significant English Section which holds seminars, tea parties with speakers and 'English days' from time to time.

At a somewhat more elevated level the Hong Kong Association for Applied Linguistics has a membership of sixty-seventy language teaching specialists, mainly from the tertiary institutions. The Association has been active since 1980, holding meetings at least monthly, with both guest speakers and 'in-house' sessions to discuss members' work in progress. Ray Tongue, a British Council officer seconded to the Education Department, was the first chairman from 1980-82.

4 Materials support

Teaching materials seem to be generally adequate, both in quality and amount, though in a number of cases unqualified teachers do not make the best use of the books they have. There are large numbers of British books, often printed in Hong Kong, and a flourishing textbook market. Hong Kong is a major publishing and printing centre for the region.

By and large the pattern is one of diversity. The Education Department issues lists of recommended textbooks for the teacher's guidance, but the teacher's choice is not limited even to this quite comprehensive list. Over the years, however, and with the effect of such centralizing influences as the English Language Teaching Centre, a pattern has become visible, and certain textbooks seem generally preferred.

The most commonly used textbooks at secondary level are:

New Access for Hong Kong Secondary Schools D H Howe, OUP, Hong Kong, 1981

*Access Today D H Howe: A A and D L Kirkpatrick, OUP, Hong Kong, 1986

Integrated English K Methold and J Tadman, Longman, Hong Kong, 1979

*New Integrated English K Methold and J Tadman, Longman, Hong Kong, 1986

English Now - A New Secondary English Course D Bloomfield and A Etherton, Longman, Hong Kong, 1979 (going out of print 1986)

*Creative English for Secondary Schools A R B Etherton, Ling Kee, Hong Kong, 1986

*English Plus Jonathan Chamberlain and Betty Jean Gran, Cassell, Hong Kong, 1986

*Introduction: New Secondary English Course for Hong Kong Ruth J Thomason, FEP, Hong Kong, 1986

*Trend Ken Methold and Janet Tadman, Longman, Hong Kong, 1986

* Specially written for the new secondary syllabus.

The most commonly used dictionary is:

Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English, Hornby, OUP, 1986.

In addition to the above, however, a wide variety of books on composition, grammar, objective tests, etc. are used. Indeed there is a common belief that the efficiency of a school may be assessed by the number of books a pupil is required to purchase. Moreover, the Chinese traditional respect for the written word produces in teachers a reliance on textbooks and an inflexible attitude towards their use which is difficult to change.

A large range of teaching materials is produced locally. In addition to educational television, there is a free tape-dubbing service for schools, offered by the Education Department's Language Teaching Centre. It has produced its own fifteen-hour programme of tapes designed for the single tape recorder available in most schools, distributes language teaching notes to all teachers of English, and publishes the English Bulletin. It has also produced two twenty-minute colour films on English teaching.

In addition to the Language Teaching Centre, other bodies, like the Hong Kong University Extra-mural Department, produce teaching materials for their own use.

5 Educational administration in relation to English teaching

Hong Kong being a Crown Colony, the policy functions that would ordinarily belong to a Ministry of Education are fulfilled by the Education and Manpower Branch of the Government Secretariat. The Secretary for Education and Manpower Branch is Mr Ron Bridges, JP (1986).

The Education Department, which actually runs the school system and has responsibility for curriculum, inspection, appointments and training, is headed by the Director of Education, the Hon Michael Leung, JP (1986).

Within Education Department, the divisions which relate specifically to English teaching are:

The Inspectorate which is responsible for implementation of the curriculum recommended by the English Subject Committee of the Curriculum Development Committee (see section 2). It also oversees the work of the Advisory Inspectorate which operates two Language Teaching Centres (see section 2), one each in Hong Kong and Kowloon: and the English Section of Educational TV. The Principal Inspector (1986: Mr K Wong) is supported by a Senior Inspector and ten Inspectors; a further Senior Inspector (1986: Mrs C Wong) is in charge of the Advisory Inspectorate Language Teaching Centres.

The Institute of Language in Education (1986: Director, Dr V Bickley, MBE), responsible for in-service training and for research in materials and methods.

6 Development and planning of the teaching of English

The last fifteen years has seen a large-scale expansion and growth in the range and scope of education. In 1971, free primary education was introduced in all government primary schools, and the majority of aided ones; and in the same year plans were announced to widen opportunities in secondary schools. In 1973, the Education Green Paper on the expansion of secondary education proposed for the first time a system of universal secondary education to the age of fifteen. The White Paper which followed in 1974 set about putting these proposals into practice, and by 1978, universal, free and compulsory junior secondary education had been achieved, one year ahead of schedule. This represents an unprecedented expansion of education at the secondary level. As late as 1971, for example, the government provided places in forms 1 to 6 for only twenty per cent of children of secondary school age. The extension of senior secondary school education has also begun and is expected to continue growing rapidly in the coming years, although there may be diversification here too, away from traditional 'academic' models towards technical and vocational training.

In response to widespread dissatisfaction with the standards of English (preamble to the 1981 Primary Syllabus), new syllabuses were developed for both primary and secondary levels. The new primary syllabus was published in 1981 and the secondary syllabus in 1983: both have now (1986) been implemented, and in the same year the HKCEE reflected the new emphasis placed on communicative ability through an increase in the marks awarded for oral/aural skills from ten per cent to twenty-five per cent of the total marks.

The new syllabuses require that communicative effectiveness, ability to use the language, will receive as much attention as the production of correct English sentences. It is this which represents a crucial change of approach from that of the previous syllabus (Secondary Syllabus, 1983).

The rationale for the new syllabus is worth quoting:

> The principal objective of the English language curriculum in the schools of Hong Kong is to provide every student with the opportunity to develop the maximum degree of functional competence in English of which he or she is capable, given the constraints inherent in the situation, in particular, competence in those domains of use which are specially appropriate to the Hong Kong situation.

The syllabus describes the most important 'domains of use' for English:

> a qualification for employment;
> a tool for study;
> the language of government and officialdom;
> communication with other inhabitants of Hong Kong;
> communication with the world outside Hong Kong;
> a medium of pleasure and entertainment.

Much of the groundwork for these new developments was laid during the secondment of Ray Tongue, a British Council Adviser in the Education Department from 1977 to 1982. Many of his proposals to the Director of Education were incorporated in a HK$320 million programme, announced in June 1981, which has come to be called the 'language package'. This programme, of major significance, was announced by the Education Department in the following terms:

> The Government has recently accepted a multi-million dollar proposal aiming to improve the standard of English and Chinese in schools and in the community. The package includes the establishment of an Institute of Language in Education, more teachers for Chinese and English in secondary schools, curriculum reform and major research projects, and acceptance, in principle, of an independent Chinese Language Foundation.
>
> The proposals will be implemented over the next few years, with some starting this year. The cost to public funds, excluding the Chinese Language Foundation, will amount to about HK$320 million over the next six years.
>
> The Institute of Language in Education aims to raise professional standards in the training, both initial and in-service, of non-graduate teachers of English and Chinese. As a 'centre of excellence' in all matters relating to language teaching and learning in schools, the Institute will promote research and design, develop prototype instructional materials, serve as a bank of language teaching resources, be an information centre and clearing house and provide a central venue for all language-teaching professionals. In time it could become a regional and international centre for English and Chinese language teaching.
>
> The comprehensive proposals aiming to improve the standard of English and Chinese in schools and the community has been accepted by the Government after a great deal of careful consideration. In phasing these proposals over the next six years, the Government recognizes the importance of evolution in an area of such major community concern. The package should be seen as vigorous affirmation of our bilingual language policy.

As a result of the language package extra teachers have been provided in forms 1-3 for remedial teaching in English and Chinese, to enable classes to be split into smaller groups for efficient remedial teaching. Also, in order to provide students with good models of pronunciation and usage, wire-free induction loop systems have been installed in schools, so that pre-recorded materials can be used for both teaching and testing.

The most significant development since the promulgation of the language package has been the establishment of the Education Commission. Set up in April 1984 to advise on educational policy, the Commission released its first report in January 1985. Its first three recommendations, all of which have been accepted by Government, are:

> the phasing out of the JSEA in 1991 through a progressive expansion of subsidized, full-time, post-form 3 educational opportunities;
>
> the improvement of standards of English and Chinese in schools;
>
> the promotion of Chinese as the medium of instruction in schools.

So far, however, parents continue to show a marked preference for English medium education and will probably continue to do so while the option exists. Hence the 1984 figures for entry to the HKCEE:

	Numbers
English Language Syllabus A (Chinese medium schools)	7,178
English Language Syllabus B (English medium schools)	134,134

7 English outside the education system

The thirst for education of the Chinese population of Hong Kong, including English language teaching, has led to the proliferation of hundreds of small commercial institutions which operate outside the mainstream of full-time education. Their greater or lesser proficiency is usually reflected in the fees they charge and the salaries they pay their teachers (ranging from HK$10 per hour in the least successful to HK$75 plus in the more successful and prestigious).

The most important commercial institutions (excepting the Council's Direct Teaching of English Operation (DTEO)) are: Josiah's School of English, which runs classes at all levels including Hong Kong School Certificate and the Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE); the Integrated Learning Centre owned by Robert Maxwell and founded by ex-Council officer Ken Wescott, specializing in secretarial and commercial training; and Sara Beattie Appointments, which began as an employment bureau and grew from the realization that a supply of secretaries could be generated by the provision of training.

Apart from these commercial institutions, the Extra-mural Department of Hong Kong University, the Chinese University and the Hong Kong Polytechnic offer English language classes in a non-commercial, loosely-controlled fashion, with teachers hired on a one-off, three hours per week contract.

Hong Kong Polytechnic and the British Council organize courses in English for Specific Purposes for corporate clients. Many major companies also run their own English language training programmes, e.g. Cathay Pacific Airways, Hong Kong Telephones, Hong Kong Bank, Sheraton Hotel, etc.

A new development is the proliferation of so-called English Clubs, which provide a cheap alternative to formal English classes: native-speakers (mostly untrained) are paid at a low hourly rate to be available for conversation with members who attend on a 'drop-in' basis.

8 British support for the teaching of English

The contribution of the British Council to English language teaching in the Colony has been enormous. With the growth of the British Council's Direct Teaching of English Operation from 400 students in 1976 to the 8,000 average termly intake in 1985, a significant resource in terms of manpower, equipment, materials, training and expertise has arisen in Hong Kong. As a result, the British Council is now looked upon as a model and source of ideas for ELT teaching, teacher training, consultancy, testing and evaluation, ESP, materials and resources by all Hong Kong bodies, including the new Institute of Language in Education, the Polytechnic, both Universities, major government, commercial, and institutional bodies and the teachers' unions.

The Council operates two Centres: one in Hong Kong and one in Kowloon. It has a specialist ELT Library, Resources Centre and Audio-Visual Production Centre, and a professional advisory, supervisory and teaching staff of over ninety.

In the last few years the Council has become extremely well known in the region for training and consultancy, particularly in testing and evaluation, teacher training, syllabus design, materials development and high quality ESP work.

Apart from activities based on the British Council centre, the most important recent development under this heading was the secondment of Ray Tongue, a British Council language specialist, to the post of English Language Advisor in the Education Department from late 1977 to late 1982 (see section 6). Many of his proposals to the Director of Education were incorporated in a HK$320 million programme, announced in June 1981, which has come to be called the language package (see section 6).

From 1980-1982, in addition to completing his work as English Language Adviser, Mr Tongue served as planning consultant to the Institute of Language in Education, one of the key components of the language package.

9 American support for the teaching of English

There is little American involvement in ELT in Hong Kong beyond the distribution to interested persons by the USA Information Service (USIS) of the very useful quarterly journal for teachers: English Teaching Forum. The Yale-in-China programme and other university attachments and exchange arrangements with the Chinese University of Hong Kong are mainly intended to help American graduates in their Chinese studies. The Institute for International Education maintains an office which is principally concerned with advising students on tertiary education in the USA and in promoting the American examinations TOEFL and TOEIC.

10 Other agency support

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) provides education services in the open and closed camps for Vietnamese refugees, including English language. Caritas has also been involved in this work. The programmes suffer from a chronic shortage of staff and materials.

11 Commercial opportunities

The major British ELT publishing houses have local branches with full editorial and publishing capacity. Most significant British ELT publishers are represented.

The English language examinations of most importance to a young Hong Kong person are those conducted by the HKEA - namely HKCEE, Higher Level and Advanced Level. The London GCE/(GCSE) O-level is also taken widely. The Cambridge FCE and CPE exams, although taken by interested language-learners, lack realistic equivalence-recognition by local institutions and authorization.

The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES)/British Council English Language Testing Scheme (ELTS) is administered by the British Council to about 250 applicants annually: this needs to be compared with the 20,000 who take the autumn TOEFL test which is administered by HKEA (1985 figure 22,971).

Information on study opportunities in UK is provided by the Education Counselling Service of the British Council. There is a small traffic of private candidates for summer schools and higher degree courses for teachers of English, but very little demand for private language schools: those who could afford the cost of such courses tend not to need them, having been educated in good English-medium schools in Hong Kong.

The opportunities for establishing private schools are poor, and getting poorer. One of the most prestigious closed trading in 1985 owing to a shortage of students, and others are seeking to diversify into other areas such as computer and secretarial skills. The reasons are believed to be the increased and increasing provision in the state sector, the emergence of English clubs offering a cheaper alternative, and rising costs, particularly in rents.

12 Creative writing

Outside the universities there is little interest in creative writing in English. English is the language of business and education; well over ninety per cent of the population conduct their social and cultural lives entirely in Cantonese.

The Urban Council has sponsored competitions in English poetry and essay writing: given the size of the population, entries have been low; the premier prize was taken by a native-speaking expatriate.

13 Current research

Considering the sociolinguistic complexity of Hong Kong, surprisingly little research relevant to the teaching of English has been carried out. In the late seventies, the British Council conducted a very useful survey of English usage in Hong Kong, and the University of Hong Kong has recently proposed the undertaking of a comprehensive sociolinguistic survey of Hong Kong. The Education Research Establishment of the Education Department conducts mainly statistical research, and the language package includes a research component which will mainly comprise an investigation into matters related to the question of the medium of instruction in secondary schools.

14 Bibliography and sources of further information

The only bibliography of research and studies related to the teaching of English to Chinese-speaking learners is: Teaching English to Chinese-speaking Learners: a first bibliography of research and studies, A Etherton, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1974.

For work after that date, reference may be made to the Hong Kong Council for Educational Research and the Research Reports of the Centre for Asian Studies.

The Working Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching published since 1979 by the Language Centre of the University of Hong Kong will repay study, as

will occasional articles in the English Bulletin published by its Education Department.

In 1982 the first issue appeared of a bilingual journal Language and Communication in English and Chinese, ed. Chinese University of Hong Kong and University of Hawaii, distributed by Jacorand-Wylie, Hong Kong.

In 1985, the first issue of the Institute of Language in Education Journal (ILEJ) appeared.

15 General statement

The main strength of the English language teaching situation in Hong Kong lies in the Colony's position as a cultural bridge between East and West, and in its need to maintain this position: without it the very reason for Hong Kong's existence disappears. English is never likely to be the first language, nor the language of the mass of the people, but it remains the medium of many of those activities on which the Colony depends for its existence and prosperity. But though the demand for English is and will remain very strong for a minority of the population, it must co-exist with a national cultural demand for Chinese.

The second strength of the ELT situation in Hong Kong lies in the very sophisticated level of its trade, tourism, banking and international commerce. These, and the peripheral services attached to them, demand the daily use of English on a wide scale. The intensely competitive spirit by which Hong Kong thrives, and which keeps it in the forefront of technological advance, will only increase this high level of activity in the English language as time goes by. This makes for a favourable language learning situation in some ways. Nevertheless the attitude of most Chinese to the English language is very ambivalent - it is virtually never used among Chinese speakers of English when no non-Cantonese speaking person is present (though English words are frequently introduced into what are essentially Cantonese conversations), and pupils hardly ever speak English outside their classrooms.

The main problems of language in education facing Hong Kong at the present time are:

the question of the medium of instruction at the junior secondary level;

the professional standards of the language teachers;

the question of whether or not English should be taught at all in primary schools.

As regards (b) the measures comprising the language package should certainly halt the decline in standards and may well go some way towards raising them. The medium-of-instruction problem is altogether more complex. In essence it is not an educational issue at all but a social and political one. It is likely that a compromise solution will eventually be reached, foreshadowed in the first reports of the findings of the Overseas Educational Development Centre (OEDC) group under Sir John Llewellyn, which carried out an overall review of Hong Kong education in 1982. What is certain is that, although the role of English in Hong Kong is not likely to diminish significantly in the foreseeable future, the same cannot be true of the role of English in education. As 1997 approaches, the political pressure to introduce Chinese as the medium of secondary education, as recommended by many educationalists, must surely become irresistible.